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# Congress of the United States

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## SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERALISM AND THE CENSUS

### Congressman Michael R. Turner, Chairman



### OVERSIGHT HEARING

#### STATEMENT BY MICHAEL R. TURNER, CHAIRMAN

Hearing topic: *"Revitalizing Communities: Are Faith-Based Organizations Getting the Federal Assistance They Need?"*

Tuesday, June 14, 2005

10:00 a.m.

Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building

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#### OPENING STATEMENT

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Welcome to the Subcommittee's oversight hearing entitled *"Revitalizing Communities: Are Faith-Based Organizations Getting the Federal Assistance They Need?"* The Subcommittee will examine how faith-based organizations accomplish community revitalization using federal grants.

The Administration's Faith-Based and Community Initiative provides a chance for faith-based groups to participate in federally funded community development efforts that were previously inhibited by bureaucratic restrictions. In the past, federal grant and cooperative agreement programs have commonly considered private or nonprofit entities, including religious and secular organizations, eligible to receive federal funds. However, interpretation and application of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, as well as policy decisions by administrators, has in the past required publicly funded programs operated by religious organizations to be essentially secular in nature.

The importance of this program was self-evident in that nine days after his inauguration, the President issued Executive Order 13198, which established offices and responsibilities at five

federal agencies for faith-based and community efforts. The President later issued Executive Order 13279, which required that federal departments treat all organizations fairly and without regard to religion in federal programs.

A 2001 Administration report, titled the *Unlevel Playing Field: Barriers to Participation by Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Federal Social Service Programs*, found that various federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), imposed burdensome regulations on faith-based groups. In response to this report and executive orders, HUD expanded its partnerships with faith-based groups to promote homeownership, provide emergency shelter and transitional housing for the homeless, build affordable housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and promote economic development in neighborhoods.

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives urges faith-based organizations to look into partnering with State and local governments. To date, 26 states and the District of Columbia have set up offices for faith-based and community initiatives to perform outreach and other functions similar to those carried out by federal offices. State actions are important because the majority of social service assistance is administered through state agencies receiving federal support.

In the report entitled *The Expanding Administrative Presidency: George W. Bush and the Faith-Based Initiative*, the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy states, "The Administration has advanced the initiative to leverage the work of caring people and private resources to supplement, not replace, the government's work." Religious and other voluntary organizations serve to strengthen families and neighborhoods. Proximity and familiarity with the people and the problems facing communities often qualifies many small faith-based grassroots organizations as the most suitable social service providers. It is very important to understand how small faith-based organizations can provide for their communities and how the government via Executive Orders or legislation can assist those religious groups. Accordingly, this Subcommittee will hear the successes and the impediments to the redevelopment of cities via services and infrastructure improvements provided by faith-based organizations.

I am eager to hear from our first witness about the changes made at HUD and the efforts underway to assist the faith-based organizations in their charitable efforts. We welcome remarks from Mr. Ryan Streeter, Director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Our second witness, Ms. Terri Hasdorff, the Executive Director Office of Faith-Based Initiatives of Alabama Governor Riley's Office, will discuss the state's efforts to support religious groups and their community development projects.

Our second panel of witnesses will discuss the important work that they do and what we can do to help them. First, we will hear from Mr. Thomas Knox, the Chairman of the Board at We Care America. Second, we will hear from Sister Rose Wildenhaus from the St. Mary Development Corporation in Dayton, Ohio. Third, we will hear from Mr. Mark Howard, Senior Vice President from World Vision. Finally, we will hear from Reverend Michael Jones from the Friendly Temple Missionary Baptist Church in St. Louis, Missouri.

I look forward to the testimony our distinguished panel witnesses will provide today. Thank you all for your time today and welcome.

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